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ABSTRACT

A sample of high school seniors was surveyed in spring 1972 to provide baseline data for the NCES National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972. The First-Followup Survey of this sample took place in fall 1973. This report describes how these young adults changed during this period of about 1-1/2 years with regard to their view of themselves, sense of control of their achievement, and their orientation toward work, community, and family goals. Statistics are presented for the population as a whole and for persons classified into subgroups based on sex, race-ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES); academic ability, high school program, and high school location (region). A brief background description of this study and relevant definitions and footnotes are given. The data are shown in both tabular form and graphical form. This bulletin presents estimates of the net amount of change that occured in the aforementioned psychological variables during the 18-month period between surveys. Gross changes, which take into account the fact that net changes result from increases for some individuals and decreases for others, will be described in a later report that will analyze the data in greater depth from a longitudinal point of view. (Author/RC)

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NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY

OF THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1972

Changes in Attitudes One and One-Half Years After Graduation

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NCES 76-227

CHANGES IN ATTITUDES ONE AND ONE-HALF YEARS AFTER GRADUATION

By William B. Fetters, Statistical Analysis Branch

INTRODUCTION

A sample of high school seniors was surveyed in spring 1972 to provide baseline data for the NCES National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972. The First-Followup Survey of this sample took place in fall 1973. This report describes how these young adults changed during this period of about 1½ years with regard to their view of themselves,[1] sense of control of their environment,[2] and their orientation toward work,[3] community,[4] and family[5] goals. Statistics are presented for the population as a whole and for persons classified into subgroups based on sex, race-ethnicity,[6] socioeconomic status (SES),[7] academic ability,[8] high school program,[9] and high school location (region).[10] A brief background description of this study and relevant definitions and footnotes are given on pages 2 through 4. The data are shown in both tabular form (pages 5-6) and graphical form (pages 7-11).

This bulletin presents estimates of the *net* amount of change that occurred in the aforementioned psychological variables during the 18-month period between surveys. Gross changes, which take into account the fact that net changes result from increases for some individuals and decreases for others, will be described in a later report that will analyze the data in greater depth from a longitudinal point of view.

SUMMARY

From spring 1972 to fall 1973, figures for each of the 18 subgroups formed by the 6 classification variables revealed--

- a net increase (+) in self-concept
- a net increase (+) in sense of control of environment
- a net decrease (-) in orientation toward work goals
- a net decrease (-) in orientation toward community goals
- a net increase (+) in orientation toward family goals

SELF-CONCEPT[1]

The amount of improvement was about the same for all of the subgroups with which this bulletin deals. Overall, the amount of agreement with statements indicating a high self-concept increased by 6 percentage points, from 86 percent to 92 percent.

CONTROL OF ENVIRONMENT[2]

All subgroups had an increased sense of control of environment. Although academic program and high ability individuals still indicated they had a greater feeling of determining what happens to them than nonacademic

NOTE: Footnotes are shown on pages 3 and 4.

program and low ability individuals, the gap narrowed considerably after persons left the high school environment. Nonacademic program and low academic ability persons showed increases of 6 and 7 percentage points, respectively, during this period, while those who had taken an academic program and those of high ability showed an increase of only 2 percentage points. The data also showed a narrowing of the difference between males and females from 4 to 2 percentage points, females having a greater sense of control. On the other hand, the difference between whites and blacks widened from 11 to 13 percentage points, whites having the greater sense of control of environment.

WORK ORIENTATION[3]

Orientation toward work values decreased overall by 8 percentage points. The amount of decrease was greatest for persons who had been in vocational-technical high school programs. Blacks were more oriented toward work than whites when seniors in high school (by 11 percentage points); 1½ years later they were even more work-oriented than whites (by 14 percentage points). A year and one-half after high school, males continued to be more work-oriented than females (by 10 percentage points), and low academic ability persons continued to be more work-oriented than high ability persons (by 11 percentage points).

COMMUNITY ORIENTATION[4]

Orientation toward community values decreased overall by 7 percentage points during the 18-month period after high school. The amount of decline generally was about the same for all subgroups, though somewhat larger for high than low academic ability persons (8 versus 5 percentage points). This put the fall 1973 community orientation figure for the high academic ability group 7 percentage points less than that for the low academic ability group.

FAMILY ORIENTATION[5]

All 18 subgroups indicated an increased orientation toward family values, the amount of increase being virtually the same (about 3 percentage points) in all cases. One and one-half years after high school, the survey revealed that Hispanics placed the greatest stress on family values, blacks and high academic ability persons the least. The difference between these two sets of subgroups (i.e., Hispanics versus blacks and high ability persons) was 5 percentage points.

BACKGROUND

The percentages presented in this bulletin are weighted national estimates. They are based on the first-level-of-edit data tape and are subject to minor modifications in subsequent editing. The data were derived from the answers of over 15,600 persons who participated in both the base-year and first-followup surveys of the National Longitudinal Study (NLS) of the High School Class of 1972. The size of the graduating class of 1972 was about 3 million.

The primary purpose of the NLS is to discover what happens to young adults after they graduate from high school, as reflected in their subsequent educational and vocational activities, attitudes, and aspirations, and to relate this information back to earlier educational experiences and personal or biographical attributes. The ultimate goal of the study is a better understanding of the growth of students in the American educational system and the factors associated with individual educational and career outcomes. Two major consequences of such information are envisioned: the planning and implementation by educational policymakers of programs to enhance educational opportunity and achievement and to upgrade occupational attainment, and the extension of current knowledge of human development for the communities of educators and educational researchers in general.

SAMPLING VARIABILITY

Since the statistics presented are based on a sample, they may vary somewhat from the figures that would have been obtained if a complete survey, or census, had been taken using the same forms, procedures, and instructions.

The difference between a statistic estimated from a sample and its corresponding census value occurs due to chance. Sampling or chance variation is measured by the standard error. The chances are 2 out of 3 that an estimate from a sample will differ from the census value by less than one standard error. The standard error does not include the effects of any biases due to nonresponse, measurement error, processing error, or other systematic errors that would occur even in a complete survey. The standard errors of the estimated changes presented in this bulletin are estimated to be less than 1 percentage point in all cases except those for the smallest subgroup (Hispanics).

FOOTNOTES

[1] *Self-concept* was measured, for the purpose of this report, by the mean percentage of persons who answered "agree strongly" or "agree" to the following statements. Other possible responses to the statements were "disagree," "disagree strongly," and "no opinion." Persons answering "no opinion" were excluded from the calculations.

"I take a positive attitude toward myself."
"I feel I am a person of worth, on an equal plane with others."
"I am able to do things as well as most other people."
"On the whole, I'm satisfied with myself."

[2] *Locus of control*, for the purpose of this report, was measured by the mean percentage of persons who answered "disagree strongly" or "disagree" to the following statements. Other possible responses were "agree," "agree strongly," and "no opinion." Persons answering "no opinion" were excluded from the calculations.

"Good luck is more important than hard work for success."
"Every time I try to get ahead, something or somebody stops me."
"Planning only makes a person unhappy since plans hardly ever work out anyway."
"People who accept their condition in life are happier than those who try to change things."

[3,4,5] *Orientation toward work, community, and family values*, for the purpose of this report, was measured by the percentage of persons who answered "very important" to the question "How important is each of the following to you in your life?" Other possible responses were "somewhat important" and "not important." There was one exception: the complement of the percentage answering "very important" was used for the last statement under family orientation because the statement is expressed from a negative viewpoint.

Work orientation

"Being successful in my line of work"
"Having lots of money"
"Being able to find steady work"

Community orientation

"Having strong friendships"
"Being a leader in my community"
"Being able to give my children better opportunities than I've had"
"Working to correct social and economic inequalities"

Family orientation

"Finding the right person to marry and having a happy family life"
"Living close to parents and relatives"
"Getting away from this area of the country"

[6] *Race-ethnicity* was determined by the subject's answer to the following question:

"How do you describe yourself?"

–American Indian
–Black or Afro-American or Negro
–Mexican-American or Chicano
–Puerto Rican
–Other Latin American origin
–Oriental or Asian-American
–White or Caucasian
–Other

The category "Hispanic" includes those who answered Mexican-American or Chicano, Puerto Rican, or other Latin American Origin.

[7]The *SES* index is a composite of five components: father's education, mother's education, parents' income, father's occupation, and household items. Each component variable was standardized and then given equal weight in calculating the composite index. The terms high, medium, and low SES subgroups refer to subjects in the upper, middle two, and lower quartiles, respectively, of the composite score frequency distribution.

[8]*Academic ability* was determined from the composite value of test scores in four areas: vocabulary, reading, letter groups, and mathematics. The mean of the four standardized scores served as a general ability index. The terms high, medium, and low ability subgroups refer to subjects in the upper, middle two, and lower quartiles, respectively, of the composite score frequency distribution.

[9]*High school program* was determined by the survey administrator's answer to the following question:

"Which of the following most clearly describes this student's present course of study?"

–General

–Academic or college preparatory

–Vocational or technical (in six categories)

In cases where the survey administrator did not provide this information, the senior's answer to a similar question was used to determine high school program.

[10]The States included in the four Bureau of Census *regions* are as follows:

Northeast (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania).

North Central (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas).

South (Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas).

West (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii).

Table 1.—Change (percentage points) between spring 1972 and fall 1973 in self-concept, control of environment, and goal orientation, by sex, race-ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic ability, high school program, and region

Group	Change (percentage points) of positive answers				
	Self-concept[1]	Control of environment[2]	Goal orientation		
			Work[3]	Community[4]	Family[5]
All persons	+5.8	+4.4	−7.5	−6.8	+3.2
Sex:					
Male	+4.9	+5.2	−7.1	−6.2	+2.9
Female	+6.8	+3.4	−7.8	−7.3	+3.3
Race-ethnicity:					
White	+5.8	+4.2	−8.2	−6.9	+3.2
Black	+4.2	+2.1	−5.4	−8.2	+1.7
Hispanic	+4.2	+5.8	−4.6	−4.9	+2.5
Socioeconomic status:					
Low	+5.4	+4.6	−7.6	−6.3	+2.9
Medium	+6.6	+4.6	−7.9	−7.1	+3.4
High	+4.3	+3.0	−6.6	−6.8	+2.8
Academic ability:					
Low	+5.8	+7.1	−7.2	−5.1	+4.0
Medium	+6.3	+4.6	−8.8	−7.0	+3.2
High	+5.1	+1.5	−5.6	−7.9	+2.5
High school program:					
Vocational-technical	+6.6	+6.1	−9.8	−5.6	+4.0
General	+5.9	+5.8	−7.7	−6.4	+3.3
Academic	+5.5	+2.4	−6.3	−7.7	+2.6
Region:					
Northeast	+6.6	+4.1	−6.9	−6.3	+3.3
North Central	+7.0	+4.9	−8.4	−7.2	+3.2
South	+4.5	+4.0	−6.9	−7.4	+2.5
West	+4.5	+4.0	−7.8	−5.8	+3.7

Table 2.—Self-concept, control of environment, and goal orientation, by sex, race-ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic ability, high school program, and region: Spring 1972

Group	Percentage of positive answers				
	Self-concept[1]	Control of environment[2]	Goal orientation		
			Work[3]	Community[4]	Family[5]
All persons	86.4	79.4	60.0	46.0	58.5
Sex:					
Male	87.3	77.4	64.7	46.0	57.4
Female	85.6	81.5	55.4	46.0	59.7
Race-ethnicity:					
White	86.6	81.3	59.2	45.1	58.6
Black	86.4	70.2	70.0	54.7	57.7
Hispanic	87.6	70.2	63.4	50.5	62.0
Socioeconomic status:					
Low	85.6	72.6	62.5	48.2	59.7
Medium	86.2	80.3	60.3	46.0	58.6
High	88.0	85.4	56.8	43.8	57.2
Academic ability:					
Low	85.9	65.5	65.7	48.1	59.4
Medium	86.0	80.9	61.1	46.5	59.0
High	87.8	89.3	53.2	43.7	57.0
High school program:					
Vocational-technical	85.8	73.1	63.2	45.7	59.6
General	85.4	73.7	61.5	46.8	58.5
Academic	87.4	86.4	57.5	45.8	58.0
Region:					
Northeast	85.6	80.2	58.4	44.3	57.9
North Central	85.4	79.9	59.6	44.8	57.9
South	87.5	77.5	63.2	50.8	60.5
West	88.0	80.6	58.6	43.7	57.6

NOTE: See footnotes 1 through 5 for explanations of how variables were measured.

Table 3.—Self-concept, control of environment, and goal orientation, by sex, race-ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic ability, high school program, and region: Fall 1973

Group	Percentage of positive answers				
	Self-concept[1]	Control of environment[2]	Goal orientation		
			Work[3]	Community[4]	Family[5]
All persons	92.2	83.8	52.5	39.2	61.7
Sex:					
Male	92.2	82.6	57.6	39.8	60.3
Female	92.4	84.9	47.6	38.7	63.0
Race-ethnicity:					
White	92.4	85.5	51.0	38.2	61.8
Black	90.6	72.3	64.6	46.5	59.4
Hispanic	91.8	76.0	58.8	45.6	64.5
Socioeconomic status:					
Low	91.0	77.2	54.9	41.9	62.6
Medium	92.8	84.9	52.4	38.9	62.0
High	92.3	88.4	50.2	37.0	60.0
Academic ability:					
Low	91.7	72.6	58.5	43.0	62.4
Medium	92.3	85.5	52.3	39.5	62.2
High	92.9	90.8	47.6	35.8	59.5
High school program:					
Vocational-technical	92.4	79.2	53.4	40.1	63.6
General	91.3	79.5	53.8	40.4	61.8
Academic	92.9	88.8	51.2	38.1	60.6
Region:					
Northeast	92.2	84.3	51.5	38.0	61.2
North Central	92.4	84.8	51.2	37.6	61.1
South	92.0	81.5	56.3	43.4	63.0
West	92.5	84.6	50.8	37.9	61.3

NOTE: See footnotes 1 through 5 for explanations of how variables were measured.

Figure 1.–Self-concept:[1] Change between spring 1972 and fall 1973, class of 1972 high school seniors

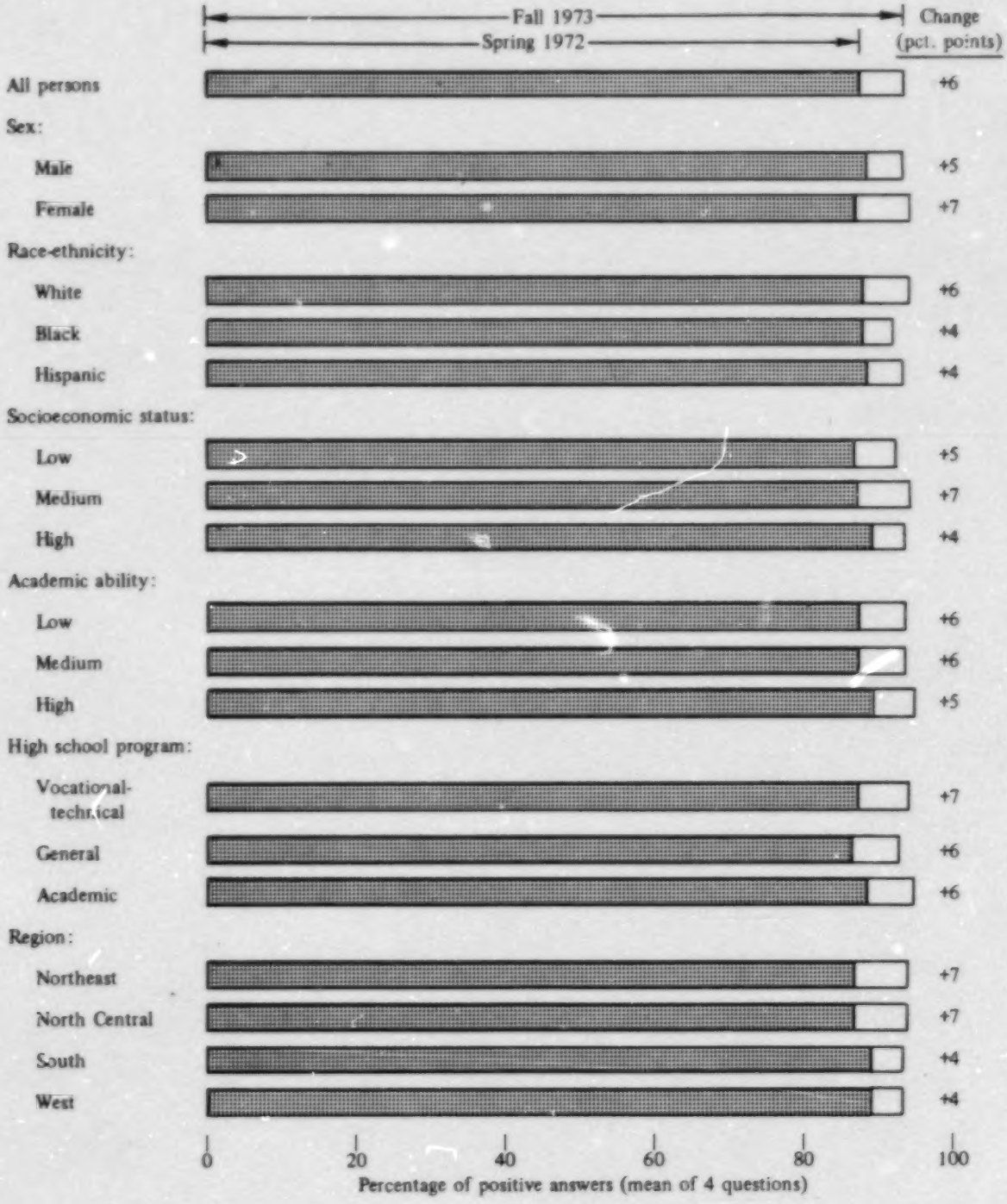

Figure 2.--Locus of control:[2] Change between spring 1972 and fall 1973, class of 1972 high school seniors

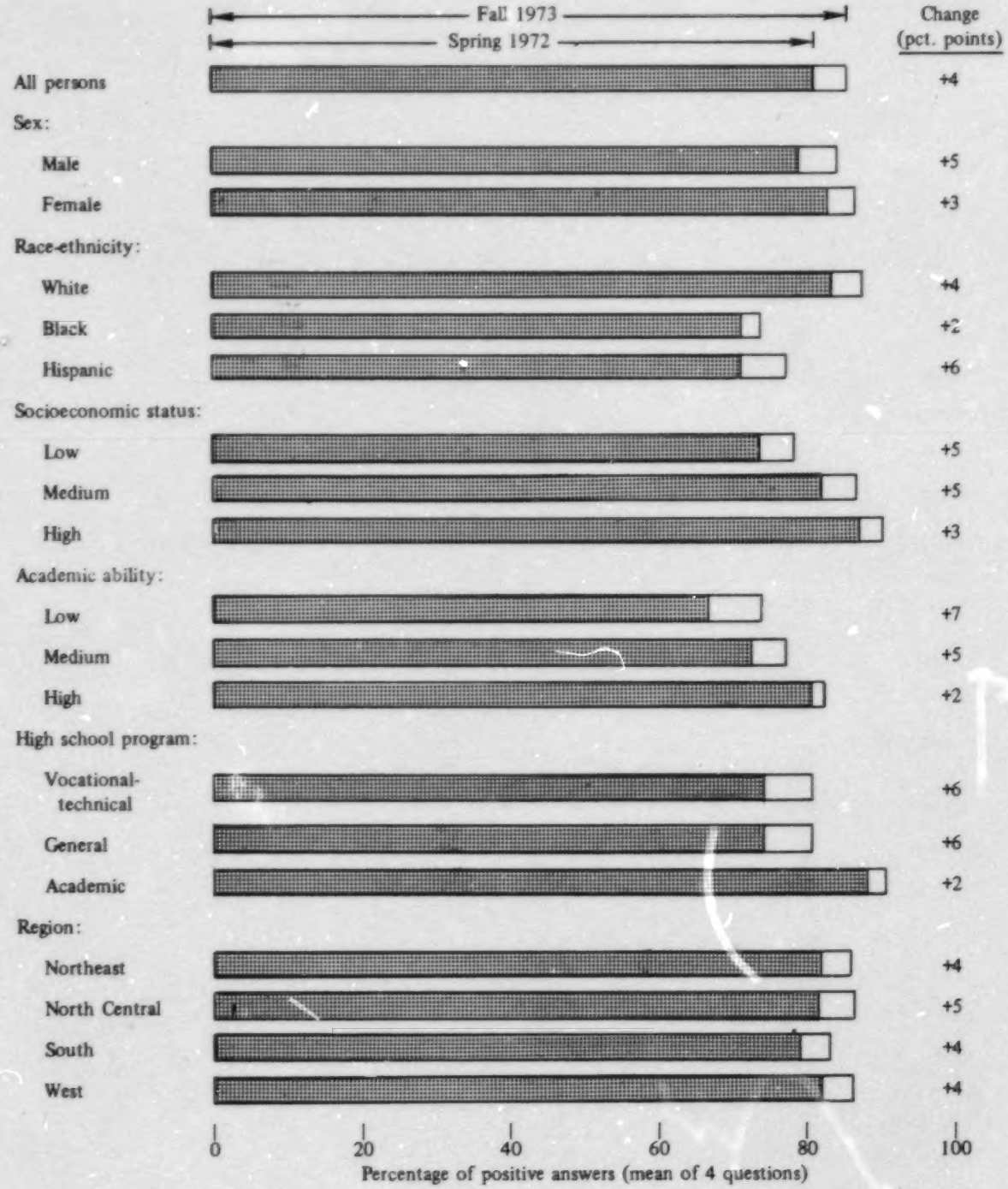

Figure 3.–Work orientation:[3] Change between spring 1972 and fall 1973, class of 1972 high school seniors

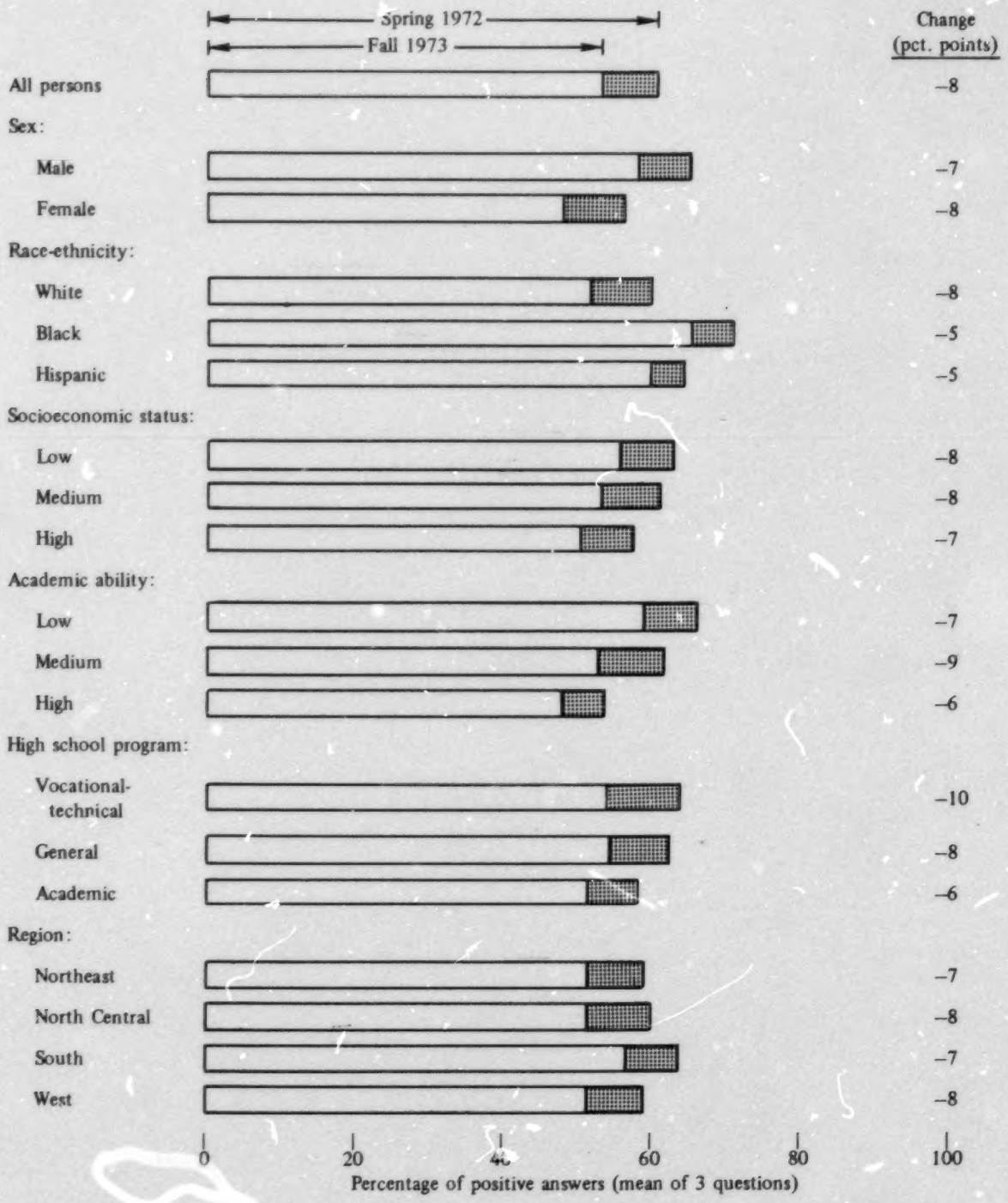

Figure 4.–Community orientation:[4] Change between spring 1972 and fall 1973, class of 1972 high school seniors

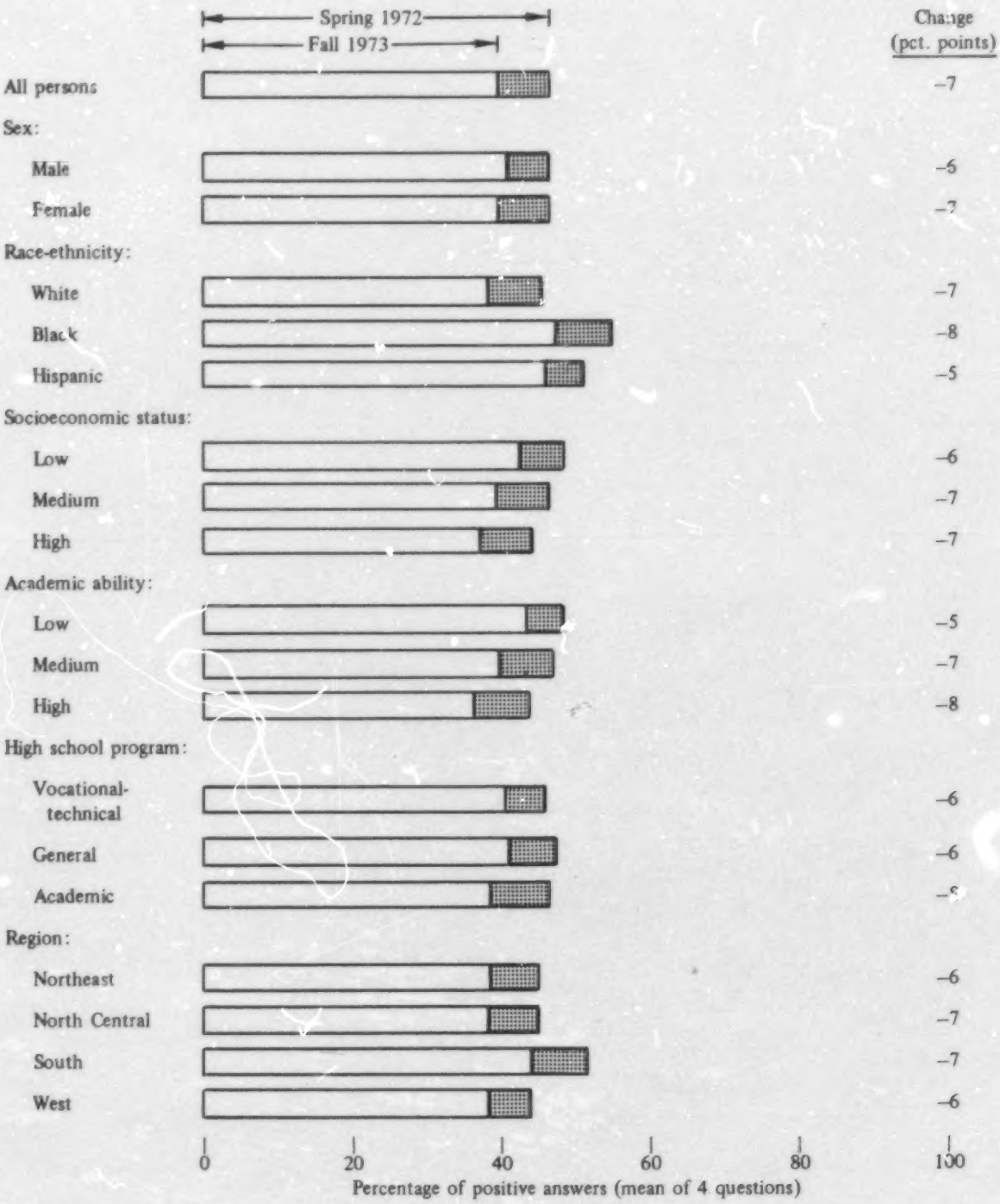

Figure 5.–Family orientation:[5] Change between spring 1972 and fall 1973, class of 1972 high school seniors